

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An image display method for displaying images of a prescribed combination in image layout formats of a plurality of types, comprising:

5 a frequency storage step of storing frequency of use with respect to a prescribed format from among the image layout formats of the plurality of types;

 a setting step of setting the image layout format, which is used in displaying the prescribed combination
10 of images, based upon the frequency of use that has been stored; and

 a display step of displaying the prescribed combination of images on a display in the image layout format that has been set.

15 2. The method according to claim 1, wherein said frequency storage step stores the frequency of use of the prescribed image layout format in association with an observer.

 3. The method according to claim 1, wherein said
20 setting step sets, for every observer, an image layout format having the highest frequency of use as an image layout format used to display the prescribed combination of images.

 4. The method according to claim 1, wherein said
25 frequency storage step counts the frequency of use of an image layout format at a timing at which the prescribed combination of images is displayed.

5. The method according to claim 1, wherein said frequency storage step counts the frequency of use of an image layout format after a change at a timing at which the image layout format is changed.

5 6. The method according to claim 1, wherein said frequency storage step counts the frequency of use of an image layout, which is being displayed, at a timing at which said display steps ends.

7. The method according to claim 1, wherein said
10 frequency storage step counts the frequency of use of an image layout, which is currently being displayed, at a timing at which the observer performs an operation for counting the frequency of use of the image layout format.

15 8. The method according to claim 1, wherein said frequency storage step stores collectively the frequencies of use of the image layouts, which have been displayed for a plurality of observers, without distinguishing among the observers.

20 9. The method according to claim 1, wherein the images are medical images and the prescribed combination is a combination of images of the same type of examination.

10. The method according to claim 1, wherein the
25 images are medical images, the prescribed combination is a combination of images of a plurality of different types of examination, and said setting step sets an

image layout format based upon the highest frequency of use from among frequencies of use of image layout formats of images of each type of examination.

11. The method according to claim 1, wherein when
5 number of ranks of frequencies of use capable of being stored has been set in advance and images have been displayed in a new image layout format, said frequency storage step excludes the image layout format having the lowest frequency of use and adds on the frequency
10 of use of the new image layout format.

12. The method according to claim 11, wherein the number of ranks of the frequency of use is one.

13. The method according to claim 1, wherein in addition to display of images, a display of a layout
15 format for notifying of the image layout format that has currently been set is presented at said display step.

14. The method according to claim 13, further comprising an image layout change step of changing the
20 layout format of the images currently being displayed on the display.

15. The method according to claim 14, further comprising a priority change step of changing a priority corresponding to the frequency of use;
25 wherein if the priority has been changed, the display of layout format is changed in linked fashion

at said display step in response to an operation for changing the priority.

16. An image display apparatus comprising:

a display for displaying images; ✓

5 a processor for setting a layout of images on said display; and

a frequency storage unit for storing frequency of use of a layout format of the images;

10 wherein said processor sets a layout format of images based upon the frequency of use.

17. A computer-executable program having program code for causing a computer to execute an image display method for displaying images of a prescribed combination in image layout formats of a plurality of types, said program comprising:

15 code for implementing a frequency storage step of storing frequency of use with respect to a prescribed format from among the image layout formats of the plurality of types;

20 code for implementing a setting step of setting the image layout format, which is used in displaying the prescribed combination of images, based upon the frequency of use that has been stored; and

code for implementing a display step of displaying the prescribed combination of images on a display in the image layout format that has been set.

18. A computer-readable storage medium storing the program set forth in claim 17.